



CONNECTICUT
HOSPITAL
ASSOCIATION

**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
Tuesday, March 17, 2015**

HB 6765, An Act Concerning Interpreter Qualifications

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **HB 6765, An Act Concerning Interpreter Qualifications**.

Before outlining concerns we have with regard to the bill, it's important to point out that Connecticut hospitals treat everyone who comes through their doors 24 hours a day, regardless of ability to pay.

This is a time of unprecedented change in healthcare, and Connecticut hospitals are leading the charge to transform the way care is provided. They are focused on providing safe, accessible, equitable, affordable, patient-centered care for all, and they are finding innovative solutions to integrate and coordinate care to better serve their patients and communities.

This bill is written to strengthen and standardize the qualifications of interpreters serving deaf and hard of hearing persons, but it would not do so. CHA and our member hospitals support efforts to improve continually the skills of qualified interpreters; however, the requirements outlined in HB 6765 would be extremely premature, considering the current landscape, and are more likely to result in a significant decrease to an already limited interpreter pool serving the deaf and hard of hearing population in Connecticut.

Our state does not have a large pool of interpreters for deaf and hard of hearing persons. An even smaller portion of that limited pool is willing to serve healthcare organizations due to the unpredictable hours and demands that come with serving in these types of settings. Many in healthcare, including hospitals, must supplement this limited pool with interpreters who can service Connecticut remotely – something provisions in this bill would make more difficult.

Ideally the provisions of this bill may someday be achievable and truly benefit deaf and hard of hearing patients. However, in the context of the current situation, this bill would negatively impact deaf and hard of hearing patients rather than serve them. If HB 6765 passes as written, it will result directly in deaf and hard of hearing persons having fewer interpreters available to them.

CHA supports working toward achieving the goals outlined in this bill, and would appreciate being involved in future discussions around how to do so but, at a minimum, the current time frames identified in the bill as written are not long enough to achieve those goals while still being able to meet the existing population's needs.

We cannot stress enough that if this bill passes as written, deaf and hard of hearing persons will be negatively impacted. If the Committee intends to take action on this bill, we would respectfully request that its implementation be delayed until 2018, the timeline currently proposed for interpreting services in an educational setting. Such a delayed implementation might allow sufficient time for interpreters to meet the requirements of the bill without adverse implications for deaf and hard of hearing persons receiving medical care.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. For additional information, contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.